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Message Text

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ACTION AF-03

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NEA-07 EUR-08 IO-06 NSC-05
PM-03 INR-05 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 TRSE-00 MCE-01 IGA-01
SP-02 ACDA-10 L-01 /067 W
----------115817 240904Z /14
P R 240714Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 577
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY ROME

S E C R E T DJIBOUTI 0080

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PDEV, PGOV, PINS, DJ
SUBJ: AFAR LEADERS TURN TO ETHIOPIA

REF: DJIBOUTI 0079

1. IN PRIVATE AND FRANK DISCUSSION WITH CHARGE ON 18 JAN, FOREIGN MINISTER ABDALLAH KAMIL STARTLED HIS LISTENER BY HIS OPENING COMMENTS ON THE LOCAL POLITICAL SITUATION: QUOTE TOMORROW I COULD BE YOUR ENEMY UNQUOTE. HE QUICKLY EXPLAINED THAT NOTHING PERSONAL WAS MEANT BY THE COMMENT. HE WAS SPEAK-ING AS AN AFAR LOOKING AT THE UNITED STATES. KAMIL WENT ON
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TO SAY THAT THE US SHOULD CONTINUE TO SEARCH FOR A SOLUTION TO UNITE THE SQUABBLING AFARS AND ISSAS AND THAT WE SHOULD BE CAREFUL THAT OUR ASSISTANCE NOT BE USED BY ONE GROUP AGAINST ANOTHER.

2. WHEN I NOTED THE RECENT REQUESTS FROM THE DJIBOUTI GOVERN-MENT FOR MILITARY EQUIPMENT (DJIBOUTI 54), KAMIL LABELED

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THE REQUEST A QUOTE PURE CASE OF TRIBALISM UNQUOTE. HE REPORTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S REQUESTS TO VARIOUS EMBASSIES HAD NEVER BEEN DISCUSSED WITH HIM BY THE PRESIDENT, AND BECAUSE OF THAT OBVIOUS LACK OF CONFIDENCE, IT WAS CLEAR THAT IT WAS AN ATTEMPT BY THE ISSAS TO SECURE MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO RESOLVE THE ETHNIC CONFLICT THROUGH MILITARY MEASURES. HE HAD HEARD OF THE REQUEST HOWEVER, FROM FORMER PRIME MINISTER DINI. I INFORMED THE MINISTER THAT THE US HAD NO INTENTION OF PROVIDING ARMS TO DJIBOUTI; HOWEVER, I NOTED THAT I WAS EXAMINING WITH MY STAFF THE POSSIBILITY OF SETTING UP SOME KIND OF ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN TRANSPORTATION. SOMEWHAT INCREDIBLY (AFTER ALL, IT WAS ONLY THE DAY BEFORE THAT THE PRESIDENT ASKED US TO RESPOND URGENTLY TO HIS REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE), THE DJIBOUTI FOREIGN MINISTER SAID THAT WE SHOULD NOT RPT NOT PROVIDE ANY SUCH ASSISTANCE. HE INDICATED THAT SUCH EQUIPMENT WOULD ONLY BE USED BY THE ISSAS TO SUBDUE THE AFARS.

3. THE MINISTER PROVIDED HIS ESTIMATE THAT NINETY-NINE PERCENT OF THE AFARS NOW LOOKED TO ETHIOPIA AS THEIR POTENTIAL SAVIOR. THIS IS SOMETHING WHICH HAS ONLY RECENTLY MANIFESTED ITSELF AS THE RESULT OF ISSA REPRESSION. REPEATING THE POINT NOTED REFTEL ABOUT THE RELATIVE MENACES REPRESENTED BY EITHER AN ARMED SOMALI OR AN ARMED ETHIOPIAN, THE FOREIGN MINISTER OBSERVED THAT US POLICY APPEARED TO BE TILTING IN FAVOR OF SOMALIA. HE DID NOT THINK THAT THERE WAS ANY FALLOUT FROM

OUR EFFORTS TO HALT THE OGADEN CONFLICT WHICH HAD YET TO AFFECT THE LOCAL AFARS. HOWEVER, HE PLEADED THAT WE NOT PROVIDE ANY LETHAL MATERIALS OR ANYTHING WHICH WOULD INCREASE THE INTERNAL SECURITY CAPABILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT. I SAID THAT I WOULD TAKE HIS CONCERNS INTO ACCOUNT IN LOOKING AHEAD.

4. SOME OF THESE SAME THEMES WERE REPEATED ON 22 JAN, WHEN CHARGE RECEIVED AFAR PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION HEADED BY DABALE AHMED, INCLUDING DEPUTIES ALI SILONG ABAKURI AND SAID IBRAHIM BADOUL. THE SON OF ALI SILONG IS ONE OF THE DETAINEES HELD SINCE THE PALMIER EN ZINC GRENADE ATTACK. THIS GROUP PRESENTED A SCENARIO WHICH PLACED FULL BLAME ON THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE DIS-AFFECTION OF THE AFARS. THEY REPORTED THAT ABDALLAH KAMIL HAD BEEN ASKED BY THEM TO STAY ON IN THE GOVERNMENT TO ACT AS CONCILIATOR. DEMANDS FOR ACTION TO REDRESS ETHNIC BALANCES IN THE ARMED FORCES AND GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT IN DEC. THE PRESIDENT HAD INDICATED SOME INTEREST AND HAD ASKED FOR MORE TIME, STATING THAT HE WAS BUSILY PREPARING FOR HIS TOUR TO THE PERSIAN GULF. THE AFAR DEPUTIES DESPAIRED THAT THEY HAD BEEN TRICKED AGAIN BECAUSE THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO INDICATION OF FORWARD MOVEMENT FROM THE PRESIDENT SINCE HIS RETURN.

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5. THE DELEGATION PROMISED TO REMAIN IN CONTACT WITH THE EMBASSY. THEY STATED THAT THEIR INTEREST IN ETHIOPIA SHOULD NOT BE INTERPRETED AS AN INTEREST IN THE SOVIET UNION, THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT AS PRACTICED AT THE PRESENT TIME IN ETHIOPIA, OR AS BLACKMAIL TO ATTAIN OUR SYMPATHY. THE AFAR LEADERS SAW IT AS THEIR SOLE AVENUE TO AVOID EXTINCTION BY THE SOMALIS.
CLARKE

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